

LETTERS

There Was No Rush To Improve Sherman Armament

Dear Sir:

COL Eddy's critique of MAJ Mansoor's book review in the September-October issue of *ARMOR* has spurred me to comment. Two of the points made by COL Eddy — the discontent with the Sherman after North Africa and the role of the user in determining requirements — are inaccurate, as I documented in my book, *Faint Praise: American Tanks and Tank Destroyers during World War II*, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Press, 1983.

First, neither the records of Army Service Forces, Army Ground Forces, nor the Ordnance Department reflect an outcry of discontent with the Sherman tank following the North African campaign. A query to all theaters about future tanks by the War Department G4 in October 1943 resulted in a mixed bag of responses, but no common view of future tanks and no evident criticism of the Sherman (*Faint Praise*, pp. 92-93). There was support for mounting the 76mm gun in the Sherman, but that decision had already been taken by the Armored Command in September 1943 (*FP*, pg. 84).

The lack of urgency from the field about any deficiency in penetrating German armor was underlined by the decision in Europe to defer issuing Sherman tanks with the 76mm gun to the first waves of troops invading Normandy because of problems with muzzle blast (*FP*, pg. 101). In large part, this lack of urgency was a result of overestimating the penetration capabilities of the 76mm and 3-inch guns, which had the same performance and were widely available in tank destroyer units. Only after firing tests in Europe in July 1944 did a common recognition of the deficiencies of U.S. firepower appear. General Eisenhower expressed the frustration of the troops when he commented:

Why is it that I am always the last to hear about this stuff. Ordnance told me this 76 would take care of anything the German had. Now I find out you can't knock out a damn thing with it. (FP, pg. 106)

Secondly, the major developmental tank program of the U.S. Army during World War II was very much an Ordnance project. A former member of the Armored Board during the war, MG (Ret.) Louis T. Heath, remembered very little input to the program from users until a prototype T26 arrived at Fort Knox in the spring of 1944 (*FP*, pg. 36). Glaring problems, such as a manifestly unsatisfactory ammunition stowage system, demonstrated the lack of user involvement prior to development of the prototype (*FP*, pg. 122). Hopefully, lack of user input to

major armaments programs is now a thing of the past.

In sum, MAJ Mansoor's comments about the armament of the Sherman tank are closer to the truth than COL Eddy's.

LTC (RET.) CHARLES M. BAILY, Ph.D.
Springfield, Va.

Abrams Himself Complained About Tank Gun Effectiveness

Dear Sir:

Dr. Eddy may be correct in stating (Letters, September-October) that it was Army users, not the Ordnance Department, who delayed upgunning of the World War II Sherman tank, but that was not necessarily the case at the working (and fighting) level.

While Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Abrams was commanding the 37th Tank Battalion in the drive across Europe, he was paid a visit by an Ordnance staff officer from a higher headquarters. That worthy observed that Abrams had mounted an Air Force .50 caliber machine gun, which had a very high rate of fire, as a coaxial gun on his tank. "But that uses up ammo too fast," objected the Ordnance fellow.

Then Abrams told the man that he would like to have a higher velocity main gun on his tank, because that would help him knock out German tanks better. "That would wear out the gun tubes too fast," explained the Ordnance warrior. "Well, hell," Abrams responded, "now we're using up tanks!"

LEWIS SORLEY
Potomac, Md.

"We Gave Away Our Seat On a Planeload of Warriors..."

Dear Sir:

I agree with MAJ Sherman about the value of the Sheridan to the 82nd ABN DIV in Panama. The real shame is that "they" (the Army money handlers) have decided not to replace the Sheridan with a new light tank. Why? Not force structure. Not based on demonstrated needs. But money. No money. Spent it in Bosnia.

So, leaders, which soldiers of the 82nd will we sacrifice to enemy fire because we didn't provide them what they needed? (refer back to MAJ Sherman's article and the incident at the bridge) What leaves a nasty taste in my mouth is that the Armor community let this happen. We gave it away. No guts. Parochial "them" vs. "us" trash. Too bad we (Armor officers) don't have the

intestinal fortitude to admit that we share the battlefield with OUR infantry, and that there are many circumstances where we SUPPORT the infantry.

The Sheridan, with its 152mm main gun, was the near-perfect light infantry support vehicle. It could swim. It had thermal sights. It had long range armor destruction capability equal to or greater than a Hellfire missile (check your PH/PK classified data!). The Shillelagh, with its 152mm HEAT round, could blow a hole in a reinforced concrete wall large enough for infantry soldiers to walk through side by side. An infantry leader could use the external phone, it boasted a fléchette round that could blast 17,000 one-inch nails into enemy infantry as close support, and, oh by the way, you could parachute it into combat for those nasty "forced entry" missions typically laid at the feet of the paratroopers of the "Devils in Baggy Pants," "Panthers," and "Falcons" of the 82nd.

Ironically, the new, better, all purpose "Armored Gun System" that was to replace the Sheridan wasn't half as good. OK, it wasn't old and out of repair parts, but it couldn't swim, blow holes big enough to walk through in walls, fire a devastating missile, or fléchette the enemy to death. It could be used in LVAD (low velocity air-drops) operations and it could fire 105mm antitank rounds at enemy armor. Great design by tankers to be a light tank meant to kill tanks. Too bad that's not what the 82nd needed. The 82nd needed a tracked (nothing strikes fear into the hearts of the enemy like a tracked vehicle!) vehicle capable of close infantry support — like the Sheridan. Not a light tank designed to fight other tanks. Let's face it, the 82nd should not (ever see *A Bridge Too Far?*) be dropping in to do battle with a tank-heavy force, if it is, it's in the wrong fight. It will, however, drop into the dead of night to secure an unfriendly airfield!

Too bad the Sheridans of 3-73rd Armor go away in January 1997, without even the

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Correction

The following safety disclosure was omitted from "Enhanced Mine Detection For Limited Visibility Operations" in the November-December 1996 issue:

This modification is for emergency combat use only. Other use must be approved with a safety release through TACOM. Permanent modification has been submitted to the Army Suggestion Program and, when approved, will provide a kit for mounting the lights on a permanent mount with a wiring harness.

LETTERS

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wimpy replacement by the AGS, and too bad for the Armor community that we gave away our seat on a planeload of warriors.

LTC JOHN L. BARKER
CDR, 2-63rd AR
Formerly Bn S3 and XO, 3-73 AR

Why Not Adopt Piranha As Sheridan Replacement?

Dear Sir:

Having read in the *Army Times* of the scheduled demise of the 82d Airborne Division's 3/73 Armor on 1 July 1997, I can't help but wonder what will replace that unit in the airborne role. The Armored Gun System (AGS) was canceled this past summer, so there is nothing in the pipeline or on the horizon as a potential replacement. I also read in the same article that the 3d Infantry Division (M) is being considered to supply a package of M1A1s and Bradleys, as needed, to the 82d, but I have grave doubts about the efficacy of that solution. If you have a secure airfield to land heavy armor, why send the 82d? It would be more efficient to insert a mech-heavy team from 3d Mech, providing speed, shock, and firepower in a more impressive package than the 82d's paratroopers and Humvees.

If it was merely a matter of firepower, the Army could equip a battalion of armored Humvees with recoilless rifles, MK-19 HVGLs, and 7.62mm mini-guns. But an armored presence is not a matter of appliqué armor and weapons. It's the vehicle itself and what its presence means. As you stated about Bosnia, the 1st Armored is there to make a serious statement about resolve and what the price of public stupidity will be.

What might be a solution to the needs of the 82d? Why not a 105mm-armed MOWAG Piranha? The vehicle exists, the Marines use the LAV variant now, and the firepower is the same as the AGS. It has the plus of being amphibious and air-portable/droppable, but the minus of not being tracked and not having heavy armor. But, an appliqué package could be developed quickly and the system could be phasing in by early summer, replacing the Sheridans while converting their crews to the new system. Of course, if you get a little carried away, why not make this new battalion a combined arms unit by putting two LAVs with two Piranhas in each platoon?

The need for airborne armor isn't going to disappear because a program is canceled, as MAJ Frank Sherman's article on the Sheridan's during Operation Just Cause graphically showed. It's incumbent on the Army to get a replacement in the hands of

those troops who can use, and who need, what Armor brings to the battlefield.

SSG Steven A. Krivitsky's fuel chart is a brilliant, simple solution to the "do we need fuel?" problem. My congratulations to him for a job well done.

LARRY A. ALTERSITZ
LTC, FA, USAR
Commander, Det B (Marksmanship)
1182d R.T.U., USAR

Kuwait Training Ain't Broke, So Let's Not Fix It!

Dear Sir:

I guess this has stewed within me long enough, and I will now try to express myself on a "General Officer Good Idea" which is definitely not a good idea.

Intrinsic Action is a superb training opportunity for a task force commander. Kuwait is the only place an LTC can bring his outfit and train, as opposed to taking part in a graded event. If we are honest with ourselves, we all realize that our Army no longer trains, we "leverage opportunities and maximize potential by evaluating and providing feedback." As I said, a graded event. This is not true in Kuwait.

Over here, an LTC and his CSM can train, really train to standard, without a 365-day experienced major telling them how fouled up they are. The TFs here now (Oct-Nov 96) have the opportunity to send platoons out and practice bounding overwatch, companies to train breaching techniques, all under the watchful eyes of their own commanders. The higher (bde/div) command group is so far away it must announce its visit. This is a great opportunity for training.

Recently, TF-Kuwait had a visit by a senior flag officer. This worthy was so excited about the potential here, he wants to "NTC-ize" the Intrinsic Action exercise. By God, we'll have O/C packages come over here and really "evaluate" the TF commander and his companies. This would really leverage the potential of the Intrinsic Action experience. (I sometimes wonder how Archimedes feels about how we turned his noun into a verb?)

My take is that adding a graded event to what is an already really tough experience would detract rather than add to the Intrinsic Action experience. Right now, three TF commanders a year get to move, shoot, and communicate like we could in the early '80s. No O/C package will make this training better. We select LTCs and CSMs for battalions who are supposed to have an idea how to train and lead. In this cavalryman's view, Kuwait is the only place in the Army right now where this can happen. The LTC can train his outfit. Intrinsic Action is not broken, so let's not fix it with O/Cs and graded events. Sixty-five kilometers north of Udairi Range is a whole Iraqi mech

division; someday there will be enough of a graded event.

KEVIN C.M. BENSON
LTC, Cavalry
G3 Plans
TF-Kuwait

If M113s Don't Work in Snow, Let's Find Out Why

Dear Sir:

CPT Morton's article (Jul-Aug 96) calling for wheeled LAV-APCs seems to use selective examples to justify his wish: a new toy wheeled vehicle. What about the three U.S. ambassadors who died when their *wheeled* APC slid off a Yugoslav road and burned?

When trashing the 11-ton M113A3, the author lumps it together with 33-ton M2s and 70-ton M1s. The question is, does the *M113* acting *alone* destroy roads? If so, then that very same gripping action makes it ideal in terms of traction compared to a wheeled vehicle... You can't complain about tearing up roads and not having traction at the same time. In snow and ice, both wheeled and tracked vehicles slip – is he saying a wheel with snow chains can go down roads that a tracked M113A3 cannot, or that because of the *desire to avoid destroying the roads*, the M113A3 wasn't allowed to go down them? How then is it that the Russian BMD, at 8 tons, is doing wonderfully in Bosnia when his wheeled APCs falter and he turns to *tracked SUVs* to get through deep snow? Perhaps the M113A3 needs wider tracks for a lower ground pressure, or those driving the M113A3s were not motivated or experienced with the vehicle in deep snow or ice. Regardless, in warmer weather, tracks can go where wheels can't – if caught in an ambush, do you want to be a dead duck, sitting on the road with shredded tires, or be able to go off-road or press on even if small arms fire hits your tracks?

Wheeled LAVs are fine so long as nobody starts shooting at you. I've said this before: if we're going to "do wheels," they need to be **SOLID** like the French AMX-10RC, so the pneumatic tire "mobility" kill followed by "catastrophic" kill doesn't happen. Why not add BRDM-type "belly wheels" to fix the HMMWV's weaknesses exposed in Bosnia? Basically, that's what his 6- or 8-wheeled LAV is doing – lowering ground pressure for an armored box with a sexy weapons turret. But the LAV has a huge fuel tank in one side of the troop compartment. This is why the Israelis created the external rear fuel cells for the M113. Wheeled LAVs do **not**, repeat not, have the same level of protection as an M113A3.

I'm not trying to be pig-headed here – if roads are destroyed by tracked LAVs and this is intolerable, we then must go to wheels. But I believe much of the enthusi-

asm for wheeled LAVs comes from training in peacetime where the allure of big sweeping movements and operational maneuvers offer the big pay-off of ego-gratifying, maneuver team commander victory. If we can harden the wheels, go for it – if not, we are sure to come to grief in the first real shooting war. Get the fuel cell(s) out of the LAVs and add the appliqué armor the USMC has been promising for almost a decade, and ensure an assault gun variant with XM-35 105mm low-recoil force gun is fielded to give our airborne/air assault/light infantry divisions/cav troops needed shock action, and I'd support the wheeled APC concept – I'm not a killjoy.

The M113A3 is paid for; if it's bad in snow, let's find out why and fix it. If we cannot afford M8 AGS (I don't believe this), then let's put 106mm recoilless rifles (surplus or new manufactured Israeli models) on M113A3s and HMMWVs (needs belly wheels, armor, solid tires) and get us an assault gun capability **NOW** before it's too late. We need the big gun more than to spend money on yet another automotive chassis. We can live with what we've got if we can get a big gun on an air-deployable vehicle.

MIKE SPARKS
Ft. Bragg, N.C.

The Digitization Revolution: Remember the Pluses

Dear Sir:

Over the past year, *ARMOR* Magazine has run a series of articles and letters addressing how digitization will impact future Army operation. It appears that company grade officers are concerned with how digitization will affect initiative at the point of the spear. Will higher command reduce the company commanders into glorified platoon leaders?¹ The view is that battalion and brigade commanders, with their superior information, will micromanage company commanders in an effort to increase speed. While digitization could have this end result, I believe it is an over-pessimistic view.

In a mid-intensity conflict with armor heavy forces, digitization and information technologies will enhance the situational awareness of the CINC to the divisional commander. Enhanced situational awareness will allow the senior commanders to mass ground maneuver forces at the decisive time and location. Long-range precision fires will paralyze and disrupt the enemy's attempt to react to the surprise insertion of ground forces.

With the flood of information pouring into the various command posts, a commander will have a real-time accurate picture of his units. By looking at his screen, a division commander will know at a glance the status of his combat, combat support, and

combat service support battalions. The enemy situation will also be clearer than ever before, based on the real-time intelligence information received from lower and higher headquarters. He could display the individual locations of his individual weapons and vehicles, but why would he do so? If he used the actual location of all of his individual systems to make his operational and tactical decisions, he would overload his *human* brain. The vast amount of information flooding into the command post will not, as company grade officers fear, create a scenario for over-supervision. It will create a situation where *mission*-type orders will dominate.

The enhanced situational awareness will allow the commander to determine whether to continue his battle plan, commit his reserve, or shift his main effort. The time required for the tactical decision process will be compressed. During an operation, a company commander will get a change of mission and graphics over the radio/computer net. The combination of shifting directions of attack, based upon current enhanced situational awareness, will eventually short circuit the enemy decision cycle. Ground maneuver will be tied to air-sea continuous operations. Depth and simultaneous attacks will enable the CINC to directly influence the enemy throughout the width, height, and depth of his battlespace. The enemy's attempt to redeploy his forces to counter the U.S. ground force will be paralyzed.

Enhanced situational awareness may allow CINC's and major ground maneuver commanders to operate in a more dispersed manner. Brigade and battalion commanders will still be operating on more traditional frontages. Digitization may allow individual platoons and companies to operate on extended frontages during an Abrams-style tank raid into an enemy rear area. However, direct fire battle math will not change. While information age technologies may give us enhanced situational awareness, it will still be mounted on 1990s tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. Battalions armed with tanks with effective ranges of 3000 meters and ATGMs of 3700 meters (supported by DS artillery) will still require tactical massing of weapons and soldiers. A formation of 1 kilometer wide attracts fire from a frontage of 3 kilometers. A formation of 4 kilometers wide attracts fire from a frontage of 8 kilometers. The wider the friendly formation, the harder it will be to mass combat power.

Terrain will also have a major effect on a battalion's formation and frontage. Very few areas of the world have direct-fire opportunities found at the NTC, Fort Hood, or Southwest Asia. DS artillery fire support is important in the open desert. It is critical in all other terrain and environmental conditions. The combined arms team will still be required for successful combat operations. Enhanced situational awareness will allow the combined arms team to strike the enemy where he is the weakest.

While a mid-intensity conflict is the worst case, the most likely scenarios for military operations in the next ten years are Operations Other Than War.² OOTW operations, by their very nature, require more initiative and maturity of company grade officers than a mid-intensity conflict. They will be required to make decisions that may have major strategic consequences, while under the scrutiny of the international media. OOTW operations are manpower-intensive. Information age technology will not be as effective in determining who or where the enemy is located. The enhanced situational awareness will allow isolated outposts to be constantly monitored. An attack on an isolated outpost or convoy will be immediately known and the appropriate counteraction quickly implemented.

In summation, the only way that digitization or information technologies will turn company commanders into glorified platoon leaders is if today's company commanders allow it to happen. The brigade and battalion commanders of 2005 are company commanders today. If they train their junior officers in the same manner they were trained, the situation will never develop. The task of incorporating digitization and information technology into the American system of battle command for the future is on the shoulders of the company grade officers of today.

¹Bateman, Robert L. CPT, letter: "Force XXI and the Death of Auftragstaktik," *ARMOR*, January-February 1996.

²TRADOC PAMPHLET 525-5, *A Concept for the Evolution of Full-Dimensional Operations for the Strategic Army of the Early Twenty-First Century*, August 1994.

JOHN S. HARREL
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Fond Memories of "The Bat Man," Ready, But Never Called to Lead

Dear Sir:

A March-April 1996 article, BG Khoi's "Fighting to the Finish" included a Foreword by my former squadron commander, COL Raymond R. Battreall. Ah! The memories came flooding back. "Lieutenant, come with me," as I felt a tug on my fatigue collar. Newly assigned and in the Baumholder O-Club for my first time, I dutifully followed this pipe-smoking, scowling lieutenant colonel until we stopped in front of the 52nd Colonel of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. Yes, he is yours, I overheard, and we proceeded to the bar to seal it with a drink.

Gin and tonic, I ordered, only to be admonished with, "Lieutenant, in this squadron we drink our whiskey neat." Having just returned from Vietnam, where we drank G&Ts to prevent malaria (or so we

thought), this newly commissioned, former WO-1 aviator, just graduated Armor Officer Basic Course second lieutenant, rolled his eyes and wondered, what have I gotten myself into? The Bat Man, as we fondly called him, influenced, for the good, so many of us lieutenants, and I shall never forget him.

While COL B told me right up front that I would never have a platoon, he would teach me what he could while flying together during training, as I had the squadron aviation support section, which consisted of a crew chief, 49 Charlie (fuel tanker) and the H-13 helicopter.

Some of those memories include pushing the ladies of the squadron and their bus up Baumholder hill in a snow storm to attend the regiment's New Year's Officers Call. Was there a lesson here? You bet, I tried never to miss a commitment in battle or peacetime during my military career. Or the time just COL B and myself walked out of Camp Alfa, a Fulda Border camp with then East Germany, and relieved ourselves into East Germany as binocular lenses glinted from the tower directly in front of us. The lesson here was, be bold in the face of your enemy.

We were the Bat Man's lieutenants, all with stories of our own, Dave, Teddy, Kerch, Rusty, et al. I don't believe any of us made general, but we were infused with a fine example of honesty, integrity, and professionalism that hopefully we passed on to those we served with. I remember asking COL B why he stayed in the Army, then a turbulent, lowly profession, and his answer stayed with me all these years. He said he prepared himself professionally to

step into a leadership role if the Army needed him, and when another student of warfare, General Franks, got to execute every cavalryman's dream on the field of battle, I finally understood what he really meant. COL Battreall was ready during his watch, he just never got the call; it went to another great cavalryman...

BILL DILLON
via E-mail

Author Seeks Contributions On WWII Tank Experiences

Dear Sir:

I have been invited by Constable Publishers of London to compile an illustrated book about tank warfare in World War II. The book will form part of their Oral History series, which currently contains three other books, viz: *War at Sea*, *War in the Air*, and *War on the Ground*.

I want to cover all aspects of the wartime life of tank crewmen both in and out of action, including training. I also need to cover all combatant nations, hence this letter. Could you please give the project as wide a coverage as possible and invite anyone who would like to help me to write for full details to the address below.

I should explain that I served for 32 years as a regular officer in the Royal Tank Regiment from 1945-77, ran the world famous Tank Museum from 1981-83, and have written many military books over the past 25 years.

The book must be completed by October 1997, for publication in June 1998, so I must start to collect material as soon as possible.

Any help you can give me will be much appreciated.

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Back Cover Correction

The article on the back cover of the November-December issue, "The Firing Pin Assembly — An Inside Look," contained one error. It stated that "disassembly of the firing pin is 20 level."

This is incorrect. Page 3-189 of TM 9-2350-264-10-2 directs the crew to disassemble the firing pin assembly. Thanks to SFC Stroh, an instructor at AOB, for pointing out this misinformation.

— Ed.